

# personnel matters

FALL 2001

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## IN OUR THOUGHTS...

BELOW: DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES DIANE UTTER'S JOB TO FLY THE FLAG AT HALF-STAFF, WAS A DAILY REMINDER. "SINCE SEPTEMBER 11, MY HEART HAS BEEN HEAVY, NOT ONLY FOR OUR COUNTRY, BUT FOR THE MANY SORROWS."



FAR RIGHT: JULYN GOODHUE, ACCOUNTING TECHNICIAN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL, LISTENS TO GOVERNOR VILSACK PAY TRIBUTE TO THE VICTIMS OF THE SEPTEMBER 11 TERRORISM ATTACK AT A MEMORIAL SERVICE IN DES MOINES.

## fall decisions about health insurance

**FALLING LEAVES. FOOTBALL GAMES.** Two traditional fall signs. Add to your fall traditions a review of health insurance options during October's benefits change and enrollment period for state employees.

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), a federal public health service agency, says that while there are two basic types of health insurance plans – indemnity and managed care – the distinction between them blurred as health care plans competed for business.

Indemnity plans typically offer more choice of providers and pay their share of the costs of services only after they receive a bill. Managed care plans, with provider agreements for a range of services at reduced cost, typically provide you less paperwork and lower out-of-pocket costs. Preferred provider organizations, which allow you to go outside the network of providers at an increased cost to you, and health maintenance organizations are both types of managed care plans.

To compare plans consider:

- Services that are covered, including types and amounts
- The location of doctors, hospitals, and other providers
- The amount of choice you want and have under the plan
- Costs, including your premium, deductibles, and limits on annual and lifetime payments

AHRQ also says that when considering the quality of the plan, look at how well the plan helps people get and stay well, its accreditations, and the ratings of the plan by those who have used it.

The National Committee for Quality Assurance, a private, non-profit corporation, has an interactive tool at <http://hprc.ncqa.org> designed to help you find the best plan for you. The AHRQ also has information on choosing a quality health care plan at <http://www.ahcpr.gov>.

Information in the Employee Benefits Handbook and a Health Benefits Comparison Chart can help you to compare options. Both are available in your department and at [www.state.ia.us/idop/BenefitsHome.html](http://www.state.ia.us/idop/BenefitsHome.html), where you will also find links to the insurance carriers' sites. □

"In the upcoming weeks as we remember the victims, their families and the freedom we sometimes take for granted, we will continue to fulfill our important responsibilities. Iowans depend on us. We can make a difference by demonstrating that this state and this country are strong. We will endure."

— EXCERPT FROM GOVERNOR VILSACK AND

LT. GOVERNOR PEDERSON'S MESSAGE TO STATE EMPLOYEES



## YOUR RESOURCES

**ONLINE** Get comprehensive benefit, job, and other information at [www.state.ia.us/idop](http://www.state.ia.us/idop)

### BENEFITS HANDBOOK

A few new copies will be available in your department in October. See your personnel assistant or view a copy online. The handbook includes a summary of changes for 2002.

### PERSONNEL ASSISTANT

Each department has designated someone to help you. (This person may have another title, such as administrative assistant or secretary. If you are not sure who to talk to, ask your supervisor.)

### ICN SESSIONS

Educational sessions will be conducted over Iowa Communications Network (ICN) sites *October 9: 9-11 a.m., 2-4 p.m., 6-8 p.m.* Sessions will be repeated, with the exception of the evening session, on *October 11 and October 18*. Even if you are not one of the over 3000 employees already pre-registered, you can still attend. See your personnel assistant if the schedules are not posted in your agency.

### DEFERRED COMPENSATION

If you cannot access information online, you may get written information by calling 515-281-8673, selecting option 1, then option 4.

### FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS

Contact the Plan Administrator, Application Software, Inc. (ASI), directly at 1-800-659-3035. Brochures are available through agency personnel. If you have problems enrolling or with your account, call 515-281-6602.

# benefit enrollment & change period

**STATE EMPLOYEES RECEIVE** a full range of benefits including several types of insurance, paid leave, employee assistance, tax and retirement savings programs, and a pension plan. Benefits are available for Executive, Judicial, and Legislative Branch permanent employees who work 20 or more hours a week with the exception of life and long term disability insurance, which cover permanent employees who work 30 or more hours a week. Because benefits are part of the bargaining process with employee unions, there are differences in what is available to employees. Some benefits are also available to part-time workers.

### WHAT IS THE ANNUAL BENEFIT ENROLLMENT & CHANGE PERIOD?

It is the only opportunity for an entire year to make changes in some benefits unless you have special circumstances (e.g., *birth, marriage, or join as a late enrollee with additional coverage restrictions*).

This year only, you can also sign up for dental coverage for you or your family members.

### WHEN IS IT?

October 5 - November 5, 2001

### WHAT MUST I DO NOW?

Review and make any needed changes to the following:

- Flexible Spending Accounts
- Health Insurance
- Premium Conversion Plan

*(This plan allows you to pay your health, dental, and supplemental life insurance from your salary before taxes are calculated, saving you income and FICA taxes. You were automatically enrolled for the insurance premium conversion when you started with the state unless you said "no." If you decided not to participate, you should reconsider.)*

### WHAT CAN I DO LATER?

You can take part in or make changes at any time throughout the year to:

- Deferred Compensation
- Employee Assistance
- Life Insurance
- Dental and health insurance, insurance premium conversion, and flexible spending if you have a qualifying event such as marriage or join as a late enrollee with additional coverage restrictions
- COBRA, to continue insurance coverage after you leave your state job. □

## benefits mean money

"A significant part of your total compensation as a state employee is in benefits and the largest portion of the benefit package is your health insurance coverage," said Steve Smith, the administrator of the Risk and Benefits Management Division in the Department of Personnel. "It is to your benefit to carefully consider all of your options for health insurance coverage."

Smith says benefits make up 20-25% of your total compensation. "You ultimately determine the value that your benefits provide you and your family. You can get the most value by reviewing and comparing all of the options available to you and making changes before November 5 to best meet the needs of you and your family," added Smith. □

## flexible spending saves

If you want to save money, take a close look at flexible spending accounts. Flexible spending accounts allow you to set money aside for certain expenses and draw from it throughout the year. The money is "pretax," or deducted from your taxable income so you can lower the taxes taken out of your check. You can set up an account for medical, dental, and other health expenses not covered by insurance or for dependent care expenses.

You must enroll for next year, even if you now have a flexible spending account. □

# do you invest with one of these providers?



**ING AETNA**  
800-814-1643 x 3749



**EQUITABLE**  
877-800-7279



**VALIC**  
800-892-5558 x 88700

By Robbie Stoecker, Kathy McAllister, and Jenny Dixon  
Stoecker and McAllister are Deferred Compensation Educators. Dixon is the plan administrator.

**IF NOT, CONSIDER OPENING AN ACCOUNT NOW.** If you contribute though deferred compensation to a provider other than these four, compare now the benefits of service, fund selection, low fees, and payment options available to you if you transfer.

These investment providers offer many well-known funds with investment managers such as Fidelity, Janus, Putnam, AIM, Franklin, American Century and more. Each has retirement planning tools to help you make decisions and provides account information online and by phone.

Deferred compensation is a retirement savings program that reduces your current income taxes and defers taxes on your investment earnings until retirement. You can enroll at any time if you work 20 or more hours per week or have a fixed annual salary. You direct your contribution, which can be as little as \$12.50 per paycheck, into a variety of funds. If you are eligible, your employer matches 50% of your contribution, up to a maximum match of \$15 a month for Judicial Branch employees and \$25 a month for Executive and Legislative Branch employees. □

*(Employees covered by the United Electrical/Iowa United Professionals (UE/IUP) contract are not eligible for the match. State Police Officers Council (SPOC) match eligibility begins 01/01/03. The deferred compensation program is not available to Regents employees.)*

## want to save more?

**THE AMOUNT YOU CAN SAVE EACH YEAR** through deferred compensation increased under the new federal tax law. You can increase your contributions for the first paycheck in January if you act by December 1, 2001.

To increase your contribution, complete a New Account and Change Form, available from your personnel assistant or at [www.state.ia.us/idop/BenDefComp](http://www.state.ia.us/idop/BenDefComp). Return it to your personnel assistant by December 1. □

### NEW ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION LIMITS EFFECTIVE JANUARY 2002

| Year       | Regular Limits<br>The lesser of 100% of net income or: | 3-Year Catch-Up <sup>1</sup> Limits<br>The lesser of twice the regular limit or the total of the regular limit plus amount of missed contributions: | 50+ Catch-Up <sup>2</sup> Limits<br>For participants age 50 or older, the regular limit may be increased by: |
|------------|--|---|--|
| 2002       | \$ 11,000  | \$ 22,000   | \$1,000  |
| 2003       | \$ 12,000  | \$ 24,000   | \$2,000  |
| 2004       | \$ 13,000  | \$ 26,000   | \$3,000  |
| 2005       | \$ 14,000  | \$ 28,000   | \$4,000  |
| 2006       | \$ 15,000  | \$ 30,000   | \$5,000  |
| After 2006 | Indexed in \$500 increments                            | Indexed in \$500 increments   | Indexed in \$500 increments  |

1. 50+ Catch-Up cannot be used at the same time as the 3-Year Catch-Up  
2. 403(b) regular Catch-Up limits will not change; 50+ Catch-Up is available

## NATIONAL CERTIFICATION TO BENEFIT PUBLIC MANAGERS

“Public managers will soon have a way to be certified that will validate them and professionalize the practice of public management in much the same way as other occupations,” stated Lois Schmitz, training specialist, announcing the state’s new Certified Public Managers (CPM) Program.

Schmitz says the Iowa Department of Personnel and Drake University’s Graduate Schools of Business and Public Administration joined efforts to bring the certification to Iowa. Originating at the University of Georgia’s Institute of Government in 1976, the national certification is now offered in 18 states, Washington D.C., and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Graduate School.

Faculty includes practitioners and academics such as Harvard University’s Dr. Marc Roberts, an expert in policy analysis. Schmitz said Roberts was a highly rated presenter at the 2000 Iowa Executive Academy for department directors and other top state administrators.

“The \$2700 cost for each manager comes to \$9.00 per contact hour. That makes it a learning value,” stated Schmitz. “You can spend that much at an out-of-state conference and not have much to show for it a year from now. This is something with long-term benefits for you and your agency,” concluded Schmitz. □

See page 4 for program details.



## Employee Assistance

515-244-6090 (Des Moines)  
1-800-EAP-IOWA  
1-800-327-3020

Counselors work for an independent, private agency and provide confidential assistance.

## ON THE RADAR: THE 2001-2002 MANAGING TECHNOLOGY SERIES



Can you beat Brian Bemisdarfer, graphic designer in the Department of Revenue and Finance, on the following test?

### WHAT DO THESE HAVE IN COMMON?

1. Techno Test Drive.
2. Did Someone Say ERP?
3. Static-Free IT
4. Hit the Road, Jack
5. Are We There Yet?

### THEY ARE ALL:

- a. Hit songs from the 60s
- b. Saturday morning cartoons
- c. Saturday night entertainment
- d. Classes in the 2001 Managing Technology Series (MTS).

Bemisdarfer, whose name was recently drawn for a free MTS session, admittedly has an advantage in choosing "d." But it's not too late for you to enroll in the first session on October 18.

Designed for managers, supervisors, and others responsible for using technology to enhance the workplace, the MTS will inform both the technologically skilled and challenged about current and upcoming technology.

Keith Hyland, Vocational Rehabilitation's Administrative Services Bureau Chief, said that, although he is a generalist and there were many technology specialists in the classes he took, nontechnology professionals should not be intimidated by the "Managing Technology" title.

"You find out about what is available and how things could impact your organization and work," added Hyland.

Each session is \$50. Sign up for all five and save \$100. Classes are held on the third Thursday of the month from October through February. Find out more at [www.state.ia.us/idop/TrainingHome.html](http://www.state.ia.us/idop/TrainingHome.html) or call Sallie Nostwich at 515-281-6382. □

## PUBLIC MANAGERS CERTIFICATION STARTS IN JANUARY



By Lois Schmitz

*Lois Schmitz is a training specialist in the department of personnel with over 25 years of teaching experience. Previously a schoolteacher, Schmitz also taught at the correctional institution in Mt. Pleasant.*

The Certified Public Managers Program, intensive leadership training designed to help managers to routinely use public management best practices, begins in January. Program graduates will receive the CPM designation, American Council of Education (ACE) undergraduate credit, graduate credit from Drake University, and one year's experience in qualifying for some state job classes.

The CPM faculty of both academics and practitioners deliver the 300-hour curriculum, two days each month, over 17 months, in four learning areas:

- General Administration & Organizational Skills
- Analytical & Conceptual Skills
- Technical, Quantitative, & Qualitative Skills
- Human Relations Skills

Federal, state, county, and local government executives, supervisors, managers, and project managers can participate. Participants will learn through discussions, the traditional classroom, and online. Tuition and materials are \$2700. For more information, contact Lois Schmitz at 515-281-6383 or [lois.schmitz@idop.state.ia.us](mailto:lois.schmitz@idop.state.ia.us) □

## TRAINERS IN TOUCH

Although Sallie Nostwich already has a solid education and professional training experience, she is today, at work, honing her skills. Four years previous, a training redesign team developed recommendations to improve employee training and development. Both Nostwich's commitment to excellence and the team's recommendations for training improvements are reflected in the State of Iowa Trainers' Consortium, a group established to help trainers stay on top of the latest tools and techniques.

The consortium, which is celebrating its second anniversary, offers Whetstone sessions, consistently rated high in meeting goals of helping trainers meet other professionals, share ideas, and take on a learner's orientation.

Jon Nelson, a consortium member, said the Whetstone sessions bring in exceptional speakers. "While all the sessions last year were good, one stands out in my mind," he said. Nelson said the session by Dr. Allison Rossett of San Diego State University entitled, "First Things Fast: Strategies for Figuring Out What To Do," provided trainers an assessment tool they could use to identify the needs of departments and individuals. "I loved this session and I still use what I learned at it today," Nelson added.

For more information go to the Web site at <http://www.state.ia.us/idop/SITC.htm> or call Sallie Nostwich at 515-281-6382. □



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